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"The person I'd really want to be is the character I played in *Heathers*," says Winona seen here with Christian Slater



Winona can be a real princess, but on occasions her verbosity can be tinted with real profanity, reports EDWARD MURPHY in his study of WINONA RYDER, one of Hollywood's most exciting and dynamic talents now to be seen in *Mermaids* with Cher and Bob Hoskins, and shortly in *Edward Scissorhands* with her boyfriend, Johnny Depp

# RENEGADE RYDER



WINONA RYDER was sweet sixteen when she *demand*ed to play the part of Veronica Sawyer in *Heathers*. The unexpected popularity of this black teen-comedy, not only propelled the

young actress into the heart of teenage iconary, but secured her a lucrative reputation as one of the most dynamic young talents in Hollywood.

Her explosive combination of controlled aggression and unruly sensuality is mined to the full in two vastly diverse movies – *Mermaids*, a romantic comedy in which she plays the daughter of Cher; and *Edward Scissorhands*, Tim Burton's wayward fantasy in which she plays Juliet opposite her real-life romeo, Johnny Depp.

The 20-year-old actress has proven herself to be hip and whacky enough to get the joke of modern life, and savvy enough to be able to play against it. Blessed with such an off-kilter ability of performing, there's a natural curiosity over the parts she accepts.

Her reasons for joining the cast of *Mermaids* was: "I really wanted to get back into performing with what I would term 'a family drama' – although it's a pretty strange family, you might gather. For a while there, I was always out on a limb. I was a rogue. A family renegade. So my involvement in that was really down to that."

For *Edward Scissorhands*, a contemporary fable concerning a misfit with scissors for hands, she smiles deviously and says: "I'm really in love with Tim Burton's absurd visual and emotional wonderment. It was a part I would have died for." She had, you'll remember, already played



the teenage communicant of the free spirits in Burton's earlier film, *Beetlejuice*. "I think that Tim is a director that I can really relate to."

In terms of true character, Winona pitches far and far wide. To understand the fiery nature of the young actress, you would possibly have to take a glance at the book collection – J D Salinger's "Catcher In The Rye", the works of Hunter S Thompson and Timothy Leary take pride and place in her huge collection.

From a very early age, she learned the value of free speech: Winona can be a real princess, but on occasions her verbosity can be tinted with real profanity – something akin to an amalgamation of James Dean, Humphrey Bogart, and Lenny Bruce.

So, will the real Winona Ryder please stand up?

"The person I'd really want to be is the character I played in *Heathers*, Veronica Sawyer," she admits when asked what character she's closest to, "I loved her literal ability, her insight into life, and above all her honesty. For me, that's the key aspect of any part I play. It has to be honest."

"The young girl in *Beetlejuice* was very lonely and withdrawn – and she let it be known through her style and body movements. Myra Lewis in *Great Balls Of Fire* – I loved that movie – was probably the furthest you could get from the real me. But the thing I associated with was her strength, her honesty, and her love for Jerry Lee Lewis."

Ryder has been entangled in a long-term now-its-on, now-its-off relationship with Johnny Depp. There was controversy when she collapsed from "nervous exhaustion" on the set of *The Godfather Part III* and was swiftly replaced by Coppola's daughter, Sofia.

The actress tends to body-swerve all in-depth questioning of her "real-life" relationship with Depp, but the mere mention of his name induces the appearance of a huge smile on her lovely face.

"We are very much an



**"I'm really in love with Tim Burton's absurd visual and emotional wonderment," says Winona who starred in Burton's *Beetlejuice* (above) and the upcoming *Edward Scissorhands* (below with Johnny Depp)**

item," she explains, "But that's as far as you get. People will always draw their own conclusions because we're famous. I don't imagine for one minute that our relationship is anymore special than anyone else's."

Ryder indicates that a number of parts are "pending", although she states later she would like "a long rest" from making movies to spend more time with Depp.

"We're both young and I think that we both should be making the most of our relationship at this stage. I'm one of these people who believe that the teenage years are the most wonderful years of your life."

She's just completed her first screenplay – "a corny romance, almost a satire, about a girl who works in a bobby-pin factory, whose dreams come true," – which she emphasises is purely coincidental to anything that's ever happened in real life.

Winona has also made a movie with Jeff Daniels, *Welcome Home Roxy Carmichael*.

